



January 2013



**A newsletter for the Veterans, their families of the
Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian community.**

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VA and Indian Health Service Announce National Reimbursement Agreement

Native Veterans Able to Access Care Closer to Home

WASHINGTON -- American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans will soon have increased access to health care services closer to home following a recent Department of Veterans Affairs and Indian Health Service (IHS) joint national agreement.

"There is a long, distinguished tradition of military service among tribes," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "VA is committed to expanding access to native Veterans with the full range of VA programs, as earned by their service to our Nation."

"The President has called on all Cabinet Secretaries to find better ways to provide our military families with the support they deserve, and that is exactly what we are doing today," said Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. "American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans benefit from this agreement, which provides increased options for health care services."

As a result of the national agreement, VA is now able to reimburse the IHS for direct care services provided to eligible American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans. While the national agreement applies only to VA and IHS, it will inform agreements negotiated between the VA and tribal health programs. VA copayments do not apply to direct care services provided by IHS to eligible American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans under this agreement.

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[HTTP://WWW.SRPMIC-NSN.GOV/COMMUNITY/VETERANS/](http://www.srpmic-nsn.gov/community/veterans/)

"The VA and IHS, in consultation with the federally-recognized tribal governments, have worked long and hard to come to an equitable agreement that would ensure access to quality health care would be made available to our Nation's heroes living in tribal communities," said Dr. Robert Petzel, undersecretary for health, Veterans Health Administration. "This agreement will also strengthen VA, IHS and tribal health programs by increasing access to high-quality care for Native Veterans, particularly those in highly rural areas."

"This reimbursement agreement between the VA and the IHS will help improve health care services for American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans and further the IHS mission and federal responsibility of raising the health status of American Indians and Alaska Natives to the highest level possible," said Dr. Yvette Roubideaux, director of the Indian Health Service. "This IHS-VA agreement will allow our federal facilities to work with the VA more closely as we implement this critical provision in the recently reauthorized Indian Health Care Improvement Act, passed as part of the Affordable Care Act."

The agreement between the two agencies marks an important partnering achievement for VA and the IHS and is consistent with the Administration's goal to increase access to care for Veterans.

To view the national agreement, please visit: www.va.gov. To find out additional information about American Indian and Alaska Native Veteran programs, please visit: www.va.gov/tribalgovernment and <http://www.ihs.gov/>.

Statement by Secretary Shinseki on the Passing of Senator Daniel Inouye

"Senator Daniel K. Inouye stood among the 'greatest' of our 'Greatest Generation.' Recipient of the Medal of Honor, our Nation's highest award for valor; distinguished service as a long-serving member of the U.S. Senate; and role model to generations of Americans of Asian-Pacific Islander heritage, especially those growing up in his beloved Hawai'i, Senator Inouye made public service a noble and honorable calling. Dan Inouye's courage on the battlefield and in Congress, his passion for making a difference in the lives of average Americans, and his intense modesty spoke volumes about a remarkable American, who embodied the bedrock values and quiet virtues of our Nation. On behalf of America's 22 million Veterans, I salute the memory of a brave man, a great patriot, a devoted public servant, an unwavering benefactor to Servicemembers and Veterans of every generation, and my friend and mentor. I extend my deepest personal condolences to the entire Inouye family."



Helping you,
help your Veteran

1-888-823-7458

What is Coaching Into Care?

Coaching Into Care provides a “coaching” service for family and friends of Veterans who see that their Veteran needs help. Coaching involves helping the caller figure out how to motivate their Veteran to seek services. The service is free and provided by licensed clinical social workers and psychologists. The goal of the service is to help the Veteran and family members find the appropriate services in their community.

Coaching Into Care takes your privacy, and that of your Veteran, very seriously. We keep all calls confidential, except for cases in which we act to protect the lives of you, your Veteran, or others.

What is the primary goal of Coaching Into Care?

The primary goal of this call center is to help Veterans struggling with mental health issues engage in VA health care in order to treat and help these individuals lead a healthy life.

What is meant by “coaching?”

Coaching involves working with a caller to reach their goal of helping a Veteran in several ways: providing information about mental health issues, discussing the best ways to communicate with the Veteran, and discussing ways to solve logistical problems about obtaining VA care.

May Veterans Call with questions or concerns?

Yes. Coaching Into Care can help Veterans find the right resource, treatment facility or Vet Center that they need.

How does a caller reach Coaching Into Care?

The toll-free telephone number is (888) 823-7458. We can work with callers between 8am and 8pm ET, Monday - Friday. Outside of these times, a staff member will take the caller’s contact information and questions, and we will return the call during the next business day.

STAND UP FOR STANDDOWN

Saturday, 16 Feb 2013

**Motorcycle Run— registration 8-10 am
VFW Post 1433, 7618 N 63rd Ave, Glendale
\$20 solo, \$35 couple**

**Last stop— Chopper John's
2547 East Indian School Road
Concert 2 pm—2 am!
Hans Olson, Elvis Before Noon & a lot in between!**

Food, drink specials! Raffle, auction, prizes!
Wear your red, white & blue and help us raise money for



which helps homeless & in need veterans!

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Confidential Help For Veterans and Their Families



"I AM A VETERAN.
Calling the confidential Veterans
Crisis Line can help. I know."

National Deployment of Paperless Claims Processing System Underway

Major Milestone Achieved in Improving Benefits Delivery

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs announced today the nationwide transition to paperless processing of Veterans' disability claims at its regional benefits processing offices is underway. VA is aggressively building a strong foundation for its new electronic claims processing system, called Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS) – a lasting solution that will transform how VA eliminates the backlog in 2015.

“Our approach to claims processing is being modernized to better serve Veterans and address the complex claims our employees are dealing with every day,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “We continue to transform our claims system to be more responsive through new processes and technology, because taking care of our Veterans and their loved ones is our highest priority.”

As of December 2012, 18 VA regional offices have implemented the new system and are beginning to process newly received compensation claims in an entirely digital format. The VA is on track for full deployment of the system to the remaining 38 regional offices in 2013.

“For our Veterans, VBMS will mean faster, higher-quality and more consistent decisions on claims. We recognize that too many Veterans are waiting too long to get the benefits they have earned, and that is unacceptable. This is a decades-old problem, and we are implementing a robust plan to address it,” said Undersecretary for Benefits Allison A. Hickey. “For our employees, VBMS will be a more user-friendly system that offers better access to decision-level information, rules-based calculators, and automated tools that help them process claims more consistently.”

This marks a major milestone in VA's transformation of the processes and systems used to deliver benefits to Veterans, their families, and survivors, even while the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) has completed a record-breaking 1 million claims per year the last three fiscal years. Critical to VA's transformation is ending the reliance on the outmoded paper-intensive processes which prevent timely and accurate claims processing. VA is deploying technology solutions which improve access, drive automation, reduce variance, and enable faster and more efficient operations to eliminate the backlog.

The current backlog of claims is the result of increased demand, over a decade of war with many Veterans returning with severe, complex injuries, and increased outreach to Veterans informing them of their benefits. Secretary Shinseki also made important decisions to recognize

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SAVE THE DATE

SRPMIC

VETERANS

RECOGNITION

POW-WOW

**A POW-WOW TO
RECOGNIZE THOSE
WHO HAVE SERVED IN
OUR NATIONS ARMED
FORCES**

April 12-14, 2013

SRPMIC Ballfield

FRIDAY EVENING

XALYCHIDOM PIPAASH/ONK AKIMEL O'ODHAM SOCIAL

ALL SINGERS WELCOME

CHIYER DANCE CONTEST

For questions please contact
Pacer Reina at 480-362-7490 or
email: edward.reina@srpmic-nsn.gov

MORE INFORMATION COMING SOON



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medical conditions related to Agent Orange service in Southeast Asia, and to simplify the process to file claims for combat PTSD. These decisions expanded access to benefits for hundreds of thousands of Veterans and brought significantly more claims into the system.

VBMS was pilot-tested at select regional offices between 2010 and 2012, with improvements and greater functionality added to system software releases throughout the testing period. In pilot programs, the new system cut the time to process claims nearly in half. The most recent version of VBMS software allows VA claims representatives to:

- establish Veterans' claims entirely in a digital environment as "e-folders,"
- receive, store, and view Veterans' submitted claim documents electronically,
- identify and track the evidence VA needs from beneficiaries and other outside sources,
- quickly direct claims electronically among regional offices to better match VA's workload with available workforce capacity.

The system also enables VA claims processors to access online rules-based calculators and drop-down menus to enhance standardization and accuracy of decisions, for both electronic claims and those received by VA in paper form and uploaded into VBMS. Processors will also use VBMS to generate letters to Veterans concerning their claim status and send requests to private physicians for medical records needed to evaluate claims.

When VBMS is combined with VA's other Transformation initiatives—including improved claims rater training, cross-functional claims handling teams, and prioritized lanes to speed processing based on type of claim—VA will be positioned to meet Secretary Eric K. Shinseki's priority goal of processing Veterans' claims in 125 days or less, at 98 percent accuracy, by the end of 2015.

For more information on VA's transformation go to <http://benefits.va.gov/transformation/>

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